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PAGES 1

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# 'Secret Deal' Over SALT Seen Routine

By Marilyn Berger  
Washington Post Staff Writer

The charges and denials exchanged about secret deals connected to the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks agreement tell less about the effects on American security than they do about the Kissinger style of diplomacy and his highly secret methods of operation.

The record shows that Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger did work out a hitherto secret "understanding" with Soviet Ambassador Anatoliy F. Dobrynin. It was not made public, nor was it shown to Congress.

Even more surprising, he did not tell the U.S. negotiators at SALT about the agreement. For almost a year, the Soviet negotiators in Geneva would drop hints about it, confusing the Americans who didn't know

## News Analysis

what they were talking about.

Not until almost a year later, according to congressional sources, were the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed officially about it. That was when the secretaries of State and Defense also got the word.

In addition, President Nixon informed Soviet Communist Party chief Leonid I. Brezhnev on July 24, 1972, in writing, that the United States would not convert its 54 Titan missiles to submarine-launched missiles as permitted by the agreement. Kissinger said at his press conference on June 24 that Mr. Nixon had told Brezhnev this orally in Moscow as a "minor gesture designed to retain general confidence."

In fact, it has been learned, the Soviets had been demanding explicit assurances on this point. The United States had to intention of increasing its arsenal of submarine-launched missiles in any case, but it now appears that something more than a "gesture" was being sought.

There are hints of other still undisclosed "understandings."

With such secret "understandings" now surfacing, top officials in the government began to wonder what else Kissinger may have been carrying around in his vest pocket. It wasn't the first time that such private deals had surfaced. Promises to the North Vietnamese were suddenly appearing. Questions were inevitably raised about what he told whom in the Middle East.

Throughout the negotiations for the first SALT agreement, it has become known since, Kissinger operated through a so-called "back channel" to move the talks along in his own way.

Few argue that there was anything necessarily sinister in Kissinger's activities. Indeed, the understanding reached with Dobrynin that was kept secret for so long was designed to clear up an ambiguity in the original agreement.

But what is under attack is what has been called the "excessive" secrecy, and the tendency to take things out of the hands of subordinates. Keeping information in a tight circle—with the expressed intention of preventing "leaks"—tends to close out the experts and to open the way for ambiguities and problems that could otherwise be avoided.

It is precisely that issue that was raised when Sen. Henry M. Jackson (D-Wash.) charged that a secret understanding drawn up by Kissinger opened the way for the Soviets to get more submarine missiles than the 1972 interim agreement on offensive weapons provided for.

The need for an understanding about the interim agreement between the Soviet Union and the United

and submarine-launched ballistic missiles permitted to each side. Kissinger said it was intended that the Soviet Union would be forced to trade in some of its SS-7 and SS-8 land-based missiles if it were to reach its limit of 950 sub-launched ballistic missiles.

But when the United States subsequently spelled this out to the Soviet Union, Kissinger said at his press conference Monday, "they disputed our interpretation and insisted that they should have the right to trade in obsolescent missiles (on G-class diesel submarines) for new missiles."

As Kissinger described it, a "month of exchanges" ensued. Finally the Soviets agreed to an interpretive statement. It was signed July 24, 1972.

In closing the loophole on the dismantling of SS-7s and SS-8s, Jackson and others now charge that Kissinger opened another loophole with his interpretive statement.

Theoretically, the new loophole would permit modernization of the missiles on the old diesel submarines. Kissinger said he feels there is no loophole and never was one, and on Wednesday said that the point that was raised was a "very abstruse and esoteric" one.

No one has argued that this would make any difference, strategically.

When Kissinger agreed on the interpretive statement, a few of his technical people in the National Security Council had an opportunity to comment on it. There was no concern expressed about any loophole.

But when the Soviet SALT delegates in Geneva

the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, the chief U.S. negotiator at SALT and the head of the CIA on June 20, 1973, almost a year after it was signed.

Kissinger said he did not feel it had been necessary to report the interpretive statement to Congress because "the substance of it... was submitted to the Congress both in public statements on our part and in testimony of administration witnesses."

On March 11, 1974, congressional sources said, the Joint Chiefs of Staff sent a memorandum to Defense Secretary James R. Schlesinger for transmission to Kissinger, then the President's national security adviser, pointing out that the Soviets had reacted negatively to efforts to close what they considered a loophole and urging that the issue be pressed.

On April 18, 1974, Kissinger signed National Security Decision Memorandum No. 252 concerning an agreement on the verification of dismantling missiles that would be retired. The memo also ordered the U.S. commissioner on the SALT Standing Consultative Commission to obtain a Soviet agreement to close the perceived loophole that might have permitted the modernization of missiles on old submarines.

Aides say that Kissinger, at that time preparing for his forthcoming visit to the Middle East to help negotiate a Syrian-Israeli disengagement, was not focusing on that particular issue. He was, therefore, taken by surprise when it became a point of public contention.

On June 18, an agreement was initiated that was to have been signed at the current Moscow summit, on the verification of dismantling

agreement some U.S. delegates began to think the Soviets just might modernize the missiles on the old subs.

According to congressional sources, the interpretive agreement was made known to the secretaries of State and Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the head of

ment closes the "loophole." Some officials charge that the United States had to pay a price that they might not otherwise have had to pay to get the loophole closed. Others argue that no price was paid.

The U.S. SALT delegation, meanwhile, was called home from Geneva in April, meaning that whatever negotiating that has been done for an agreement at the current summit has been largely in Kissinger's hands.

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summit in May, 1972, arose because of certain ambiguities that had crept into the document during the last hurried moments of negotiation.

Members of the U.S. delegation to SALT, then meeting in Helsinki, received last-minute instructions on May 28 to draft a protocol according to terms agreed in Moscow at the "highest level." No SALT technical experts, and no members of the delegation, were present in Moscow. The delegation in Helsinki had no discretion to change any wording. A number of them say they were aware that ambiguities existed. The pressure to get an agreement for signing at the summit meant that some ambiguities would have to be overlooked.

The agreement put limits on the number of submarine